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RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/14/2016
TAGS: [BE](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [USUN](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [EU](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: DEMARCHES ON SYRIA AND LEBANON

REF: A. STATE 150032

[1](#)B. STATE 148157

Classified By: POLCOUNS TED ANDREWS. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Poloff discussed points on Syria and Lebanon (refs A and B) with Jean-Luc Bodson, Deputy Chief of Staff, responsible for middle eastern affairs, in the Belgian Foreign Ministry. Bodson said Belgian Foreign Minister DeGucht generally believed a constructive dialogue was needed with all the parties in the Middle East conflict, including Syria, Iran, Hamas, and Hizbollah, in order to gain peace in the region. He acknowledged, however, it was less clear how and when such a dialogue should occur.

[1](#)2. (C) Bodson said there was a division within the EU on contact with Syria. Although FM DeGucht favored dialogue with Syria, the lack of any "leverage" with Syria probably precluded such dialogue in the near term. Bodson stressed there were no plans for Belgian officials to meet or have contact with Syria in the near future.

[1](#)3. (C) On Lebanon, Bodson felt the focus should be on how to channel relief and reconstruction assistance so that it remains in the proper hands and is appropriately managed and distributed (Belgium has offered 5.5 million euros to date). He indicated FM DeGucht may travel to Lebanon the end of October or early November as part of a trip to celebrate the opening of a new Belgian embassy in Doha. He thought Belgian troops should be on the ground in Lebanon in early October.

KOROLOGOS

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